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SUBJECT: ANNUAL OVERSEAS SECURITY ADVISORY COUNCIL (OSAC)  
CRIME AND SAFETY REPORT - SAO PAULO

REF: 08 STATE 132056

(U) Annual OSAC Crime and Safety Report -- the following responses are keyed to Reftel.

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Sao Paulo  
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11. CRIME AND SAFETY SITUATION:

1A. Crime Threats: The criminal threat for Sao Paulo is rated critical by the Department of State. Despite reported decreases in crime levels in the State of Sao Paulo, crime is still oppressive and widespread. Much of Sao Paulo's crimes and violence can be attributed to mobile street gangs and organized crime groups. Sao Paulo continues to be notorious for the brazenness of certain high profile crimes and violent crimes such as murder, rape, and kidnappings. Armed assaults and burglaries continue to be a part of normal everyday life.

Every Sao Paulo neighborhood is susceptible to high crime rates. Reports of armed robberies continue to occur regularly in the generally affluent residential sections of Jardins Morumbi and Santo Amaro, where a number of government and business leaders and a majority of the US Consulate employees reside.

The major crimes that tend to dominate the environment in Sao Paulo and are still a serious concern to Consulate employees and Americans in Brazil are express or lightning kidnapping, carjacking, virtual kidnapping and home/complex invasion. Express kidnappings occur when criminals force their victims to extract their daily cash limit from an ATM machine, virtual kidnappings are a telephone scam designed to get potential victims to pay a ransom even though no one close to them has been kidnapped and home invasions involve large groups of heavily armed criminals who take over either houses or apartment complexes and rob the owners or all the occupants. Home/complex invasions usually are well planned and involve the use of a person on the inside or a scam (such as impersonating police, mail carriers, or potential homeowners) to gain easy access. Levels of gratuitous violence are on the increase and the majority of criminals use lethal weapons in the course of carrying out their activities.

1B. Safety: Street crime remains a problem for visitors and local residents alike, especially in the evenings, late at night travel or during traffic jams. It is advised to use caution with regards to evening travel due to reported incidents of roadside robberies that randomly target passing vehicles. Everyone is regularly cautioned about incidents of robbery and "quicknappings" outside of banks and ATM machines. The wealthy or those with perceived financial affluence continue to be the most attractive targets for professional criminals. Road conditions within Sao Paulo are subject to extreme flooding due to poor drainage during rainstorms.

12. POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND CIVIL UNREST

#### I.A. Historical Perspective:

The threat of political violence is one that continues to be an ever-present possibility. There have been protests in the past, some with significant numbers depending on the issue. While the majority of these protests are peaceful, violence can occasionally flare-up resulting in some rioting, significant property damage and increased police activity. All visitors should exercise caution when approaching crowds and should refrain from going out when there are ongoing protests.

#### B & D Organized Crime & Civil Unrest:

In 2006 São Paulo experienced some of the worst violence the city and state had ever seen, as violent prison gangs revolted against State security forces and the conflict spilled out into the streets. The violence was mainly the work of one organization known as the First Capitol Command (PCC), a violent prison gang which reportedly controls the majority of illegal contraband and drugs coming in and out of the prisons in São Paulo. The civil unrest resulted in the deaths of over forty police officers and hundreds of criminals, although civilians were not specifically targeted. Police stations and municipal buildings were attacked and public buses, gas stations, and ATM machines were randomly burned throughout the state and city, creating hysteria and paranoia among the local populace.

I.C. International Terrorism: The tri-border area, comprised of Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay, is home to a large Arab community. As of this date, no incidents directed against official or non-official Americans have occurred in this area, some anti-American sentiment has been expressed in the region. It is recommended that American visitors to the area, to include Foz de Iguazu, remain especially vigilant and maintain a low profile. There are, at this time, no known indigenous terrorist groups, other than the organized crime elements listed above, operating in Brazil. Brazil is a non-aligned country with no significant enemies and is not targeted by any known radical groups. Certain border areas, including those in the tri-border region, are considered porous.

### I3. POST SPECIFIC CONCERNS

I.A. Earthquakes and Floods: Natural disasters such as earthquakes are not a major problem in Brazil.

In November 2008 flooding in the southern state of Santa Catarina left nearly 100,000 homeless and claimed over 100 lives. The disaster is one of the worst in the country's history.

Severe rainstorms in 2006, 2007 and 2008 saw some of the worst flooding in years for São Paulo, with bridges and highways closed due to flooding and major roads and highways submerged underwater. The most recent rainstorm in December 2008 left 20,000 residents without water, motorists stranded, and 70 canceled flights at Congonhas International Airport.

In many cases weather conditions such as rains can cause severe gridlock within the city, sometimes turning a 40 minute ride from the center of the city to the International airport into a three hour marathon. Congonhas International Airport is susceptible to heavy rainstorms and air traffic comes to a halt during inclement weather.

I.B. Industrial and Transportation Accidents: São Paulo being the economic and commercial center of the country, as well as the most populated, sees its share of these types of incidents. Some vehicle accidents carrying hazardous chemicals have occurred within the last year causing roadways to be closed down for significant periods of time until the area could be cleared and sanitized. In January 2007, a major construction site near a Subway station in São Paulo suffered a sink-hole collapse killing five and destroying

many construction vehicles. In July 2007, a TAM passenger flight from Porto Alegre to Sao Paulo, skidded off the runway and crashed at Sao Paulo's Congonhas airport killing 149 passengers. The accident drew attention Brazils increasing problems with aviation safety. In addition, Sao Paulo reportedly has over 400 helicopters in circulation, as most CEO's of major corporations and the wealthy chose to avoid the vehicle congestion and gridlock in this manner.

**1C. Kidnappings:** The majority of kidnappings in Sao Paulo continue to be of the "lightning or quicknapping." variety. The criminals will abduct someone for a short time, usually a Brazilian citizen, in order to receive a quick payoff from the family, business, or the victim's ATM card. In some cases they will even take the victims shopping if their ATM cash limit has already been met. However, all foreigner's, including Americans, are vulnerable to this crime as well. Virtual kidnappings continue to be prevalent and remain one of the most popular common scams perpetrated by criminals in Sao Paulo. In these cases, a random telephone call is generated to an unsuspecting family and a ruse is conducted claiming that a member of the family has been abducted and a ransom is demanded. In reality no family member has been taken but the criminals are able to elicit important information from the distraught family members and take advantage of their emotional state to generate a ransom payment. In some cases the criminals have evolved this concept to include recordings in the background of children or others crying for help. Consulate personnel have been subject to these crimes in the past but none of them successful from a criminal standpoint.

**1D. Drugs and Narcoterrorism:** Sao Paulo, like many cities throughout the world, experiences the effects of persons addicted to illicit drugs. This includes criminal activity, such as street assaults and robberies, which are used in support of their addictions. Several Brazilian cities continue to be viewed as likely transshipment points for illicit drugs. Large numbers of impoverished people are scattered throughout the city of Sao Paulo. Public officials have expressed frustration with the difficulty in addressing these social problems, including the challenges faced by local law enforcement when directly dealing with these issues.

Reports of cargo theft, from both overland shipments and from storage facilities, occur frequently, and are rising in other cities within Sao Paulo state such as Campinas, Porto Alegre and Santos. Airports countrywide, as well as private companies have become actively engaged in instituting supplemental security measures and countermeasures to combat these crimes.

#### **14. POLICE RESPONSE**

The Police support, both from the Military and Civil Police, for the Consulate in the past year has been excellent, especially in view of rising criminal incidents around the Consulate area. Police authorities still cite a lack of resources, under-staffing and payroll issues among the key reasons why response times are delayed and a significant amount of crimes are not solved. Military police units will not even respond to the scene of a vehicle accident unless there are injuries, all parties involved must go to the local Civil Police precinct if they wish to obtain a police report for insurance purposes. Sifling and oppressive traffic conditions continu to be an important factor with regards to crimeprevention, as Brazilian law enforcement entities continue to look for creative means of policing to overcome these obstacles, e.g. community policing base stations in Favela's ("Slums"), motorcycle, helicopters and even cavalry units for major events.

Visitors are asked to inform the Consulate in the event they encounter any problems while traveling in Brazil.

Sao Paulo Emergency Phone Numbers:

Fire Department - 190  
Ambulance - Dial 190

#### 15. MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

The following local hospital has been identified by Post as suitable for use by visitors to Sao Paulo:  
Albert Einstein Hospital  
Avenida Albert Einstein, #627  
Sao Paulo - SP  
Telephone: (55) (11) 3747-1233

For Air Medical Evacuation Services -- Post recommends visitors consider purchasing private air medical evacuation insurance, before traveling to Brazil, which will provide medical information and insurance for overseas travelers. Post can assist visitors with further information about obtaining these services.

Vaccinations and Immunizations -- Travelers should consult with their own medical provider prior to traveling to Brazil, regarding immunization and vaccination requirements. Travelers should have a documented yellow fever card, especially after recent reports of cases of yellow fever in Brasilia.

#### 16. CRIME AVOIDANCE, SAFETY AND PREVENTION

Crime continues to be the principal and real threat to visitors to Sao Paulo. The crime threat in Sao Paulo is critical. Armed street robberies are common in Sao Paulo. Consulate employees and visitors have been robbed at gunpoint while walking on the street. Taxi's and private vehicles should be used when moving about. Even while driving motorists are targeted by armed bandits patrolling the streets on motorcycles who prey on potential victims waiting at traffic lights or stuck in heavy traffic. Utilizing tinted windows and keeping valuables out of sight are viewed as the best defenses against this type of random criminal activity.

Sao Paulo's International Airport continues to be an area of concern from a security perspective. Reports of crimes against travelers along the road to the airport frequently occur as criminals look to identify potential targets of wealth and affluence as they arrive and depart. Laptop computers are still the number one choice of thieves and criminals in Sao Paulo and travelers should seek to use alternative and more concealable means of transporting information, such as "thumb drives" or CD/DVD ROMs. If laptops are brought in to Sao Paulo they should be stored discretely in luggage and/or placed in the trunk of a vehicle.

Visitors should practice good common sense preventative security techniques, just as they would in any large metropolitan city in the world where crime is prevalent. Below are some of the more important tips visitors should follow to avoid becoming a potential crime victim:

Do not carry or wear valuable items that will attract the attention of thieves. If you need to wear expensive jewelry or carry a camera, conceal it until you arrive at your destination. Do not physically resist any robbery attempt. While this is a personal decision, statistics show that resistance can lead to severe consequences such as injury or potentially something more fatal.

Avoid city buses and other public transportation. Many pass through high crime areas and are susceptible to robberies. Brazilian law enforcement and security authorities have expressed private concern that the next wave of violent interaction with the PCC could take place in the transportation system. In 2006 one public bus was highjacked, near the Consulate, and all the occupants on board were robbed with the incident ending in a shoot-out with police. Only use legitimate taxis at taxi stands or have your hotel call one for you directly.

Be aware of the street environment and avoid contact with those who may be looking for potential crime targets. Seek a safer location. Go into a store, bank or simply cross the street and alter your route. Use well traveled, well-illuminated streets and always plan your routes before you leave for your final destination.

**17. FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

U.S. companies are encouraged to contact the RSO in Sao Paulo for specific inquiries concerning the local security situation. Information is also available from the active OSAC Country Council operating in Sao Paulo.

American Consulate General Sao Paulo - is located at Rua Thomas Deloney, 381 Chacara Santo Antonio, Sao Paulo-SP, 04710-110. The telephone switchboard number is (011-55) (11) 5186-7000. The RSO POC may be reached at (011-55) (11) 5186-7260. The Consulates fax number is (011-55) (11) 5186-7099.

Emergencies calls after normal hours may be directed to Post One at (011-55) (11) 5186-7373.

**18. OSAC COUNTRY COUNCIL:**

Post has an extremely vibrant and proactive OSAC Council with over 100 members, to include major U.S. Companies such as Motorola, General Electric, 3M, McDonalds and Citibank. The council meets monthly, usually at the American Chamber of Commerce in Sao Paulo, however additional venues for meetings and related functions are selected on a regular basis. RSO attends all Council meetings to engage in roundtable discussions with members. The Council takes an active role on all issues of crime and security in Sao Paulo and surrounding areas to include outreach to public officials for speaking engagements, training seminars as well as an extensive e-mail network to promote ideas and facilitate the exchange of information and contacts. Country council information can be located, via password, at the OSAC website at the following address, [www.osac.gov/countrycouncils](http://www.osac.gov/countrycouncils).

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